

TRICK IS TO TOUCH

MICHAEL LUND

BEATA Batorowicz likes to challenge the perception that art should be seen and not touched. She produces work crafted from fur and leather, so naturally she wants people to stroke and feel the many different textures.

But still people are reluctant to touch.

At one exhibition she included a rug made from pieces of fur.

"Some of the people were too afraid, so at the opening night I decided to step on it, and someone told me off," she says, laughing.

Batorowicz couldn't bring herself to tell the person it was her work and stepping on it was all part of the plan.

"It was quite ironic," she says. "There's that kind of barrier I like to play on because you never know how people are going to react to it."

Her latest exhibition, *The Trickster's Tent*, is a series of characters drawn from European folklore and fairytale from her home country, Poland.

She left when she was five but was brought up hearing the tales told by her family.

As with all good fairytales, there's more to the characters than first meets the eye.

"There definitely is a cynicism and I do parallel the idea between a trickster and the role of the artists and how with the crafting through creativity you overcome a lot of boundaries and issues," she says. "I think that's what the role of the artist is. Drawing upon your dark side can have a positive effect as well."

So back comes the rug. Or is it a wolf, a favourite of many fairytales?

"The fur rug is actually a mix of fur colours, a patchwork, quite lush and random and sporadic and visually loud," she says.

At one end though is a wolf's head held on a leash.

"It's like the wolf is about to run away but then it's leashed and it's being tied, so there's that morphing between the animal and the rug," she says.

Batorowicz, 31, is an artist who likes to practise what she preaches. After a time in Melbourne, then at Griffith University, she has spent the past two years teaching spatial construction at the University of Southern Queensland in Toowoomba.

"I think it's really important that I keep practising so I'm in tune with students as well," she says.

That doesn't mean she's not nervous about the new exhibition at Artisan.

The gallery space is being painted red to complement her creations.

"It's quite a small space so it's going to be quite overbearing," she says.

"This time it's very much a lar-like situation, so I'm quite curious to see whether people are actually brave enough to stand on the fur rug."

So remember, if you do see anyone on the rug, don't tell them to get off. It could be Batorowicz.

SEE **Beata Batorowicz, *The Trickster's Tent*, Artisan, today until July 27.**
www.artisan.org.au



Who's afraid:
a wolf inspired
by European
folklore.